

UNCLAS MUSCAT 000271

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARPI (TROBERTS), NEA/PPD (CWHITTLESEY), NEA/P (FFINVER), INR/R/MR  
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH  
PARIS FOR ZEYA  
USCENTCOM FOR PLUSH  
FOREIGN PRESS CENTER/ASILAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KPAQ KMDR OIIP MU

SUBJECT: OPPORTUNITY FOR ISRAEL AND PALESTINE, THE SECRETARY'S TRIP TO EUROPE, AND A NEW PALESTINIAN PRESIDENT

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Putting Peace to the Test  
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¶1. The government-owned Arabic daily "Oman" published an editorial on February 12 entitled, "The Necessity of Ending Confrontation":

"Israel and Palestine have agreed -- yet again -- to end violent confrontations between their respective citizens. Similar commitments to peace have been swept aside repeatedly in the past. What is different about this time? Usually these agreements fall apart because the Israeli or Palestinian opposition do not back them and do all they can to ensure that violence resumes. It seems reasonable to assume that opposition to this most recent agreement will also test the resolve of the Israeli and Palestinian leaders. Time will tell whether the leadership of Israel and the Palestinian territories will be able to stop the violence and prepare the path for a lasting peace over time."

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Renewing Relationships in Europe  
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¶2. On February 12, privately-owned Arabic daily "Al-Watan" carried an editorial entitled "Black Face. . . White Heart":

"Dr. Condoleeza Rice, the new Secretary of State, wants Europeans to open a new page in their relations with America. Indeed, many of the leaders she met with renewed their commitment to cooperate with her government, despite two years of shaky relations caused by the war in Iraq. However, the encouraging statements of most European leaders -- especially those of French president Chirac -- do not mean that challenges and obstacles do not await Dr. Rice as she attempts to push the American agenda forward. The French president told Dr. Rice that France will support the political process in post-election Iraq, but at the same time France wants American support for European linkages with Iraq. The Europeans also want greater American involvement in the Arab-Israeli peace process, specifically the appointment of a special envoy on the issue and the holding of a peace conference at which Sharon would commit to removing all of the Jewish settlements in Gaza and four settlements in the West Bank by the end of the year."

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New Leader, New Policy  
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¶3. "Al-Watan" also published an editorial on February 13, entitled "New Abu Mazen":

"May God be with the new Palestinian leader; he is already being tested by outdated political processes and encumbered by the overwhelming expectations of his people. Abu Mazen's first task is to distinguish his policies from those of former Chairman Yasser Arafat. He also wants to implement and enforce new rules for responding to conflict that reflect his own views. In addition, he hopes to establish a timeframe in which he can implement his new policies without outside interference, so that they will stand a chance of taking hold and creating a new reality for the Palestinian people."

BALTIMORE